

1415 Grand Avenue #1  
San Diego, California 92109  
January 5, 1974

Dear Gary,

Thank you for taking the time to write to me and express your concerns. Your points are well taken, I know that you feel very strongly about them and for that reason I will try to answer them point by point.

About my letter to the Advocate; and it was my letter, written by me alone without consultation from anyone at the Center. It was me who was misrepresented and misquoted. It was written on my personal stationery (not the Center's) and signed as an individual (not as Co-director). The first lines of the letter did thank the Advocate for the coverage and went on to say that I still felt compelled to correct certain "inaccuracies". It was necessary to be very explicit about those two points with which I took issue because they are the very points which are the subject of the most controversy at the Gay Center For Social Services. They are the very issues which will determine whether the Center continues to exist--not whether the Advocate likes us or dislikes us. It is because I am aware of the wide circulation of the Advocate that I wrote my rebuttal to "Mailbag" rather than to Leo Lawrence or the owner of the Advocate. I didn't simply wish to "get even". I wanted all those who had read the article to be aware that the sexist attitudes expressed there were coming from the reporter--not the Center. And if you will re-read the letter you will see that I made the distinction between the reporter and the Advocate in general.

I also pointed out the one-sided male orientation of the Advocate because it is destructive to unity and trust between gay sisters and brothers. Is Advocate beyond criticism? Would it hurt anything to raise the consciousness of the Advocate and some of their readers at the same time? I think not. I think that readers should express their opinions in order to improve the paper.

Everyone, with any consciousness, who read that article cringed when they got to the part about the women. Any good that was done by the positive portion of the article was more than undone by the negative portion. I was attacked for even pinning the article up on the bulletin board at the Center. Pat Byers asked me, "Would you have put the article up if it was racist rather than sexist?!" I could not answer that question. My only comfort was that I had already written my letter to the Advocate and I didn't feel quite as bad as if I had been unconscious of the unfairness to our women. No, Gary, I am not willing to allow the Advocate to project a negative image of the Center just because they have a wide circulation or seem important to some people. They are not too big to admonish.

As for the auction--I would have not intentionally hurt the feelings of any contributor. To make a derogatory remark in front of Richard Schmidt (who brought the items in question) was an indiscretion on my part. I was not even aware that it happened. (I'm taking your word for it.) However relevant it may now be, Richard, whom I have come to know as a result of the auction, took no offense what-so-ever.

Nevertheless, the whole situation is a good one because it nicely illustrates a theme that runs through every point that you have used to support your charge of a "Thank-you-but-fuck-you" attitude at the Center. That theme is one of too much work on the shoulders of a few and a lack of input or participation on the part of much of our staff. For example--Don and I begged everyone who had offered anything for the auction to have it at the Center or the Barbary Coast no later than noon, Dec 17. We even offered to pick the items up. Don and I were at the B.C. before 9 AM, tagging,



pricing items and preparing a program acknowledging all contributors. I spent at least four hours on the telephone trying to get people to live up to their promise to get their donations to us on time. An incredible burden was brought to bear on us by people not doing what they had promised to do or by doing it too late. As for the belts and shirts that Richard brought, they were all inappropriate for the auction. Can you imagine us auctioning off one belt at a time? That doesn't mean that I had any right to be unkind to Richard. But neither does it mean that we had to auction his items off. Richard was thanked profusely and told that the items he brought would be more appropriate for a yard sale. After more than 12 hours nonstop hassle it is a wonder that I was civil to anyone.

About Gary Stoker's work: I liked the thank-you note very much and endorsed the rough draft that I saw. I never saw a finished copy. Was it ever finished, Gary? Camera ready? Did you ever talk to me about it? I don't recall you expressing any concern about it to me.

I've often wondered about the logo that Gary S. did and what happened to it. As far as I know it was never "officially" submitted to the then steering committee for consideration. I doubt that more than 3 or 4 of us ever saw it. Who's fault was that, Gary? And who "lost" it? Certainly not me. It was never in my possession. And as I understand it, Gary S. made the logo on his own initiative (probably after some discussion with you) but not at the request of the Center. This fact doesn't make his work any less acceptable, but rather he is to be commended for his initiative. But it certainly puts the Center under no obligation to use the logo. Also bear in mind that four other logos were submitted--none of which were adopted. No one else felt hurt.

As far as the invitation goes, I have explained to you the reasons that it could not be used. No one denied that it was nice or that it took a great deal of time in preparation. It simply was not what Don asked for and therefore could not be used on the size card that we wanted without modification (reduction) and no printer could get it ready before Monday--too late for a bulk mailing! Now what good is something that you can't use? Gary's education and talent is not in question and I feel that your attempt to make that part of the issue is unfair and irrelevant.

I regret that Gary does not want to do a drawing of the whole house as requested for the invitation. We had hoped to use the same one for the new brochure. You see, one drawing, if done as initially requested, could have served both purposes and saved much time. But if that decision is final we will just have to abide by it.

Would your understanding of the matter be increased by reminding you that you were one of the most vocal critics of the first newsletters and flyers that Gary Gulley did on Gestetner. Gary G. had worked hard on them. They simply did not meet the standard.

Attitudes which I have expressed about the businessmen are not exactly as you have interpreted them: re your remark "...we think you are fucked but we want your help." On the other hand, I do not intend to allow strings to be attached to the businessmen's support to the extent that the Center will become such a bundle of compromises that it will cease to be a source of social consciousness or a model for social alternatives.

Gary, if you had been present at either one of the last two all-staff growth groups most of this letter would not have been necessary--particularly the part about the Advocate's treatment of women. If you had been more directly involved with the auction you could have had more empathy for the frustration I was feeling by December 17. If there had been more support for Don and I in preparation for that auction, preparations for the open house could have begun long ago. The



designing and printing of invitations would not have to have been done at such a last-minute feverish pace, causing us to pass up a beautiful design because it needed a slight modification.

When you, Gary Vrooman, decide that it is fair or OK to leave the burden of running the Center on the shoulders of two or three people, you are relinquishing the right to criticize decisions that are made. I hope that your commitment to the Center can survive some disagreements and some challenges. I hope that you will be able to show more flexibility in the future than you have in the past when your position is questioned. I hope that you will become close enough to me to be aware of the criticisms, challenges, and frustrations that I face daily. I can not handle them alone.

Love in struggle,

*Jess*

P. S.: One more hope---that this letter will clear some things up and promote understanding rather than turn you off.

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